

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2188

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, PO

SUBJ: CHANGES IN FOREIGN MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAM

REF: STATE 51768 (DTG 031747Z MAR 76)

SUMMARY: THE RESULTS OF INCREASED TRAINING COSTS ARE LIKELY TO BE THE FOLLOWING: (A) PORTUGAL, BECAUSE OF ITS PRECARIOUS ECONOMIC SITUATION, WILL BE UNABLE TO PICK UP THE DIFFERENCE; (B) AZORES BASE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE NEGATIVELY AFFECTED; AND (C) THE TOP POLICY PRIORITY OF CREATING A PROFESSIONAL NATO-COMMITTED ARMED FORCES CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING A STABLE DEMOCRATIC REGIME WILL SUFFER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE IN RESPONSE TO PARA 5 OF REFTEL:

(A) THE GOP WILL CERTAINLY BE SHOCKED BY THE CHANGES IN COSTS. THIS REACTION WILL BE AGGRAVATED WHEN
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THE GOP DISCOVERS THAT THE NUMBER OF TRAINING COURSES

FOR WHICH WE HAVE ENCOURAGED THEM TO PLAN WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE AND THAT SOME OF THE USG TRAINING COMMITMENTS MADE IN NOV 75 CANNOT BE MET. THIS CHANGE COMES AT A MOMENT WHEN THE US IS MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO BRING PORTUGAL BACK INTO THE NATO FAMILY AND WHEN WE ARE CLOSE TO RESUMING THE AZORES BASE NEGOTIATIONS.

(B) U.S. ARMY BRANCH ADVANCED COURSES ARE OF GREATEST INTEREST TO THE PORTUGUESE ARMY. THE PORTUGUESE NAVY HAS BEEN PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL TRAINING AND SHIPBOARD PROFESSIONAL COURSES. OF GREATEST INTEREST TO THE PORTUGUESE AIR FORCE ARE UNDERGRADUATE PILOT TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL MILITARY TRAINING. THE GOP IS NOT PAYING FOR THIS TRAINING AND, GIVEN THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY, WILL NOT BE IN A POSITION TO DO SO FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. THUS, ALL U.S. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS MUST BE SATISFIED BY THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OR THE GOP WILL BE FORCED TO ABANDON THEM. TRAINING PROVIDED BY THIRD COUNTRIES IS RELATED DIRECTLY TO EQUIPMENT RECEIVED FROM THOSE COUNTRIES. IF THE PORTUGUESE FORCE DEVELOPMENT MODERNIZATION PROGRAM, NOW BEING DEVELOPED IN COORDINATION WITH SACEUR, RESULTS IN THE PROVISION OF NEW U.S. MATERIAL, AS IS LIKELY, ADDITIONAL GRANT AID TRAINING WILL BE A VITAL PART OF THE PROGRAM.

(C) PROFESSIONAL MILITARY COURSES (I.E. USA COMMAND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE AND USAF AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE) AND USN POSTGRADUATE COURSES PROVIDE THE GREATEST BENEFIT TO U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS. THEY ARE PROVIDED UNDER GRANT ASSISTANCE. IF TRAINING COSTS ARE DRASTICALLY INCREASED, THESE COURSES WILL STILL BE PROVIDED UNDER GRANT ASSISTANCE BUT FOR SUCH A REDUCED NUMBER OF STUDENTS AS TO GREATLY REDUCE THE PROGRAMS UTILITY TO THE U.S.

(D) SHARPLY INCREASED COURSE COSTS REPRESENT THE GREATEST THREAT TO THE USN POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL TRAINING AND USAF UNDERGRADUATE PILOT TRAINING. BOTH COURSES ARE VERY EXPENSIVE BUT PROVIDE VALUABLE AND LONG LASTING DIVIDENDS.
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(E) PORTUGAL WILL FIRST LOOK TO THE OTHER NATO COUNTRIES FOR ADVANCED MILITARY TECHNICAL TRAINING/EDUCATION. THIS WOULD REDUCE MILITARY COMPETENCE SIGNIFICANTLY AS NO SINGLE NATO COUNTRY CAN FILL THE US ROLE. IF A VARIETY OF COUNTRIES JOIN IN TO HELP FILL THE GAP, THEIR EFFORTS WILL LEAD TO THE CONFUSION INHERENT IN SEVERAL DOCTRINES BEING PROVIDED TO A SINGLE NATION. INFLUENCE CLOSELY

FOLLOWS TRAINING AND IF THE GOP IS ABLE TO FIND THE QUALITY OF TRAINING THEY NEED IN OTHER COUNTRIES, THIS WOULD DEFINITELY ERODE RELIANCE ON THE U.S. THE MOST IMPORTANT AND IMMEDIATE IMPACT WILL BE A SERIOUS LESSENING OF AMERICAN-PORTUGUESE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCE. THIS WILL DAMAGE OUR NEGOTIATING POSITION IN CURRENT AND FUTURE AZORES BASE NEGOTIATIONS.

(F) THE ELIMINATION OF GRANT TRAINING WOULD VIRTUALLY END U.S. TRAINING -- AT LEAST UNTIL THE ECONOMY RECOVERS AND EVEN THEN THE TRAINING WOULD BE REDUCED TO BARE ESSENTIALS. AT PRESENT ALL US TRAINING IS DONE THROUGH THE GRANT PROGRAM. IT WOULD IMPACT VERY HEAVILY ON THE MORALE OF THE "OPERATIONAL" (MODERATE) MILITARY GROUP WHO WRESTED CONTROL OF THE MILITARY AWAY FROM THE LEFT LAST YEAR. THIS GROUP COUNTS ON THE US TO BACK UP THEIR EFFORTS TO BUILD A PROFESSIONAL NATO-COMMITTED ARMY DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING A STABLE DEMOCRATIC REGIME IN PORTUGAL. TRAINING IS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF THE SACEUR FORCE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL, AN INITIATIVE WHICH RATED TOP PRIORITY IN THIS EMBASSY'S 1976 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT.

2. COMMENT: IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT OFFICERS FROM THE AIR FORCE, THE SERVICE WHICH MOST BENEFITTED FROM US TRAINING IN THE PAST, TOOK THE LEAD IN RESISTING THE COMMUNISTS IN PORTUGAL.

3. THE TWO WORST CONSEQUENCES OF A CUTBACK IN TRAINING WILL BE THE EFFECT ON THE AZORES BASE TALKS -- A NEGOTIATION IN WHICH THE MILITARY WILL HAVE A DECISIVE VOICE -- AND THE RESULTS A CUTBACK WILL HAVE ON OUR ABILITY TO IMPLEMENT THE FORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.
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